



AILSA FERGUSSON

MERCURY

Element Symbol: **Hg**
Atomic Number: **80**

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With the atomic number 80, Mercury (Hg) is a unique metal considering it has a very low melting point. Due to this property Mercury exists as a very dense liquid at room temperature, its relatively high atomic number means that many less dense metals and elements will float on the liquid. It is also known as "quicksilver" as it has a luminous silver colouring.

Mercury has been known to human kind for centuries. In Ancient China Mercury was thought to prolong life, heal fractures and maintain good health. People even went as far to create elixir's containing mercury. Ironically this lead to a very quick death, even condemning an Ancient Chinese Emperor. It has also been discovered that the Ancient Greeks used mercury in ointments and for cosmetic purposes. It has even been found in Egyptian tombs dating back to 1500BC.

Mercury used to be extensively used in thermometers, but due to safety concerns it has been largely phased out. However there are still many existing uses for Mercury, Primarily it used for the manufacturing of industrial chemicals or in electrical applications. Notably, gaseous mercury is used in low pressure fluorescent lighting as well as many scientific tools where UV radiation is required.

As recently as the 1960's, before Mercury's health issues were fully understood, Mercury had far more applications. It was used in gold mining and silver mining, as it creates an amalgam (A combination of mercury and another metal) thus making collecting these rare metals far easier. It was also used in medicine and cosmetics. Within medicine Mercury has been used for Dental amalgams, vaccine preservatives and even tropical disinfectants. Today however the uses of Mercury have been greatly declined, especially in developed countries, due to its toxicity.

Some scientists have predicted that mercury may be used in the future as a working fluid for a heat-pipe type of cooling device for spacecraft heat rejection systems. Mercury has had its presence in Human societies from as earlier as the ancient Egyptians, and it appears it will continue to benefit humans long into the future.

Provided by the element sponsor Evolve Scientific Recruitment

ARTISTS DESCRIPTION

Mercury has had a long history of use by man, signified by the alchemy symbol for this element. Texts from some old science books have been manipulated into spheres nestled within the bottom of the "g".

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